



# Thailand Professional Qualification Framework: Are Necessarily Good Policy Practice, Especially for Aviation Personnel?

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## Abstract

In the global marketplace, professional qualification is an instrument to succeed in professional services. Thus, it is important to study the Thailand Professional Qualification Framework (TPQF) policy and practice. This paper, through a comprehensive literature review, reveals the terms of Professional Qualification Framework (PQF) and National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). PQF and NQFs has similar dimension and perspective. Several Europe countries, Australia and New Zealand invented NQFs by emphasizing vocational qualifications; whereas, United Kingdom and Thailand established PQF by focusing on competency based of work experiences. This paper also reveals a necessary policy practice for Thai employees, especially aviation personnel. In the other words, TPQF probably expects beneficial areas for aviation personnel. The review shown in this paper describes that TPQF is essential for aviation personnel in different aspects; facilitating the movement of professions; ensuring professional standard and supporting lifelong learning. Albeit some countries outcomes-led qualification frameworks are unlikely to succeed.

**Keywords:** Professional Qualification Frameworks, National Qualification Frameworks, Aviation personnel

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## Introduction

In the European Union, professional qualifications is a device to achieve in a global marketplace of professional services in the light of legislation (Plimmer, 2002); for instance, United Kingdom profession qualification has been requires to facilitate management since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. United Kingdom employs three elements to accomplish the full professional qualification that are specific skills, practical competence based on work experience, and development under individual competence. Specific skills and practical competence are elements that focuses on an academic while individual competence is based on modular working and training experience. It is the most challenging element to achieve.

For Thailand, however Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) is a public organization and works under the prime minister's supervision. TPQI main purposes are to increase human capital competitiveness and create economic valued added, according to expectation of the launch of Asean Economic Community (AEC). TPQI is responsible for establishing and implementing qualification framework by determined the standard to measure performance of individual in order to guarantee "Qualifications". Thailand

Professional Qualification Framework (TPQF) was established in 2012 to promote professional qualification system in the nation. TPQF was introduced as a key mechanism to enhance the progress and productivity of worker in Thailand. In the world of working, knowledge, skills and proficiencies are essentially needed for a professional worker (Thailand Professional Qualification Institute,2018). Therefore, to perform work effectively and productively, employees do need both knowledge and several skills that derived from practice and on-the-job learning. Notwithstand it is called competency. In order to perform competently, each job need to have several competencies to perform work effectively and productively, and each job requires different competencies.

During 2013-2018, TPQFs plays an important role as a tool to guarantee those who have the competency on the occupational standard from 44 sectors and 481 professionals such as logistics, automobile service, tourism, spa service, digital content, mechatronics as well as aviation business. Individual's competency certification based on occupational standard will give to those who have educational background and those who have not.

## Literature Reviews

### National Qualification

#### Frameworks (NQFs)

National qualification frameworks (NQFs) have been growing and increasing both in national and international since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Qualification Frameworks can be defined as an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills. As well as, knowledge and competencies on national level or regional level is a set of criteria which is applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes (Tuck, 2007). Several researchers advocated that all countries should adopt these frameworks since they are necessary development, positive, modern and achieve design goal (Young, 2007). They also argued that this is the form of two processes namely, modernization and globalization. The form of modernization has reduced differences within the nation and between countries; whereas, the form of globalization has shown the greatest mobility of labour between the countries. For instance, a European Qualification Framework attempts to reduce barriers free labour movement within European countries.

United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand were early preliminary countries to implement NQFs which mainly focus on vocational qualifications, and emphasis to be designed as overarching

frameworks for all education perspectives (Chakroun, 2010). NOFs are a global phenomenon (Young, 2003). There are almost 70 countries across the world developing or planning an NQFs that ranged from industrialized states to fast-developing countries in Asia and developing countries in Africa (2010, cited in Chakroun, p.201).

The purposes of NOFs are elements of national qualification systems that include the processes and rules for accrediting, awarding and quality assuring qualifications (Bateman et al., 2012). Several countries established and developed qualifications frameworks for many purposes – implicit or explicit. In the review of NQFs across Europe, Bjornavold and Grm (2009) have demonstrated the NOFs purposes as followings:

- Making national qualifications systems easy to understand;
- Clarifying and strengthening the relationship between qualifications within the systems;
- Coordinating conjunction of qualifications systems by engaging different part of education and training;
- Supporting lifelong learning by making learning pathways visible, participation and progression;
- Enhancing the communication between education, training and labor market;

- Creating a platform for cooperation and dialogue with stakeholders; and
- Providing a reference area for quality assurance.

Coles described that NOFs are classifiers the relationship between the horizontal and vertical continuum regarding the different form of qualifications (2006). The key features of the NOFs can be concluded as a qualification in terms of learning outcomes that includes knowledge, skills and competences. They ranked according to a single hierarchy of levels, and a set of occupational and/or knowledge areas (Young and Allais, 2009). Many countries increasingly contain common distinctive features as follows:

- the qualifications are independent of vocational education and training;
- quality assurance systems are foreseen to validate qualifications, accredit institutions and ensure quality assurance in assessment leading to the award of qualifications; it is easier to put value on learning programs in order to accumulation and transfer credit (Chakroun, 2010).

#### **The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)**

The EQF was founded by the European Parliament and the Council since 2008 by acting as a translation device to lead national qualifications more readable across Europe countries, and promoting both learners and workers mobility among countries in order to facilitate their lifelong learning. The EQF is appropriate to all kinds of education, training and qualifications. Workers and individuals are allowed to employ the EQF to understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries, education and training system. Several European countries intended to develop NQFs by linking with the EQF. EQF is an essential tool to enhance the free movement of students and of graduates across Europe. The European comission has encouraged a distinction of mutual recognition. Those are professional purposes and academic purposes. Professional purposes describe as a need to be recognized in order to work in a certain profession; whereas, academic purposes describe as a need to be recognized in order to continue studies (European Commission, 2008).

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) comprises ten ASEAN members – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand. AEC was established in

late 2015 which the AEC Blueprint 2025 is aimed toward integrate South-east Asia's diverse economies into a single market and production base which is stable that is highly integrated and cohesive, competitive, enhanced connectivity and people oriented, people centered community which increase integrated to the global economy (ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS). Thus, In 2014 The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworks (AQRFs) were developed and endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers, ASEAN Labour Ministers, and the ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting. The AQRF purposes support and enhance the AEC's member national qualification framework or qualification system by providing a mechanism to facilitate comparison, transparency and better quality qualifications systems

The AQRF consists of 8 levels which each level has two components - learning outcomes and level descriptors (see Table1). Firstly, the AQRF is a hierarchy of levels of

complexity of learning; thus, AQRF employs learning outcomes as the metric for the hierarchy. Learning outcomes focus on the results of learning together with credit transfer and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Secondly, the Level descriptors are purposed to provide reference point for the levels in NQFs. The level descriptors express the notion of competence which includes cognitive competence, functional competence, personal competence and ethical competence. In addition, the level descriptor includes two domains – knowledge and skills and application and responsibility. The knowledge and skills mean various kind of knowledge for instance fact and theories together with the cognitive skills. Whereas the application and responsibility are defined as the context, the knowledge and skills are employed in practice. Thus, the level descriptors expect that the learning outcomes are cumulative by level (ASEAN Ecomic Minister, 2014)

**Table 1:** The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworks (AQRF)

Sourced from: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (2014)

Knowledge and Skills	Application and Responsibility
Demonstration of knowledge and skills that:	Demonstrated the contexts of knowledge and skills:
<p><b>Level 8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is at the most advanced and specialized level and at the frontier of the field</li> <li>• involve independent and original thinking and research, resulting in the creation of new knowledge or practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are highly specialized and complex involving the development and testing o new theories and new solutions to resolve complex, abstract issues</li> <li>• requires authoritative and expert judgment in management of research or an organization and significant responsibility for extending professional knowledge and practice and creation of new ideas and or processes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is at the forefront of a field and show mastery of a body of knowledge</li> <li>• involve critical and independent thinking as the basis for research to extend of redefine knowledge or practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are complex and unpredictable and involve the development and testing of innovative solutions to resolve issues</li> <li>• require expert judgment and significant responsibility for professional knowledge, practice and management</li> </ul>

Table 1: (continuous)

<b>Level 6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is specialized technical and theoretical within a specific field</li> <li>● involve critical and analytical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● are complex and changing</li> <li>● require initiative and adaptability as well as strategies to improve activities and to solve complex and abstract issues</li> </ul>
<b>Level 5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is detailed technical and theoretical knowledge of a general field</li> <li>● involve analytical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● are often subject to change</li> <li>● involve independent evaluation of activities to resolve complex and sometimes abstract issues</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is technical and theoretical with general coverage of a field</li> <li>● involve adapting processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● are generally predictable but subject to change</li> <li>● involve broad guidance requiring some self-direction and coordination to resolve unfamiliar issues</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● includes general principles and some conceptual aspects</li> <li>● involve selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● are stable with some aspects subject to change</li> <li>● involve general guidance and require judgment and planning to resolve some issues independently</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is general and factual</li> <li>● involve use of standard actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● involve structured processes</li> <li>● involve supervision and some discretion for judgment on resolving familiar issues</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● is basic and general</li> <li>● involve simple, straightforward and routine actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● involve structured routine processes</li> <li>● involve close levels of support and supervision</li> </ul>

In addition, AQRF has revealed ten areas that countries are probably expect benefits from NOFs as follows:

- Increasing consistence of qualifications
- Increasing currency of single qualifications
- Showing transparency for individuals and employees
- Recognizing a wide range of learning forms
- Increasing the portability of qualifications
- Referencing points of qualification standards of the national external
- Clarifying of learning pathways and progression
- Acting as a platform for stakeholders for strengthening cooperation and commitment
- Understanding and comparison of a stronger basis for international co-operation
- Greater connecting of national reform policies (ASEAN Ecomic Minister, 2014)

## 2.3 Thailand Profession

### Qualification Framework (TPQF)

In an intensely competitive labour market, knowledge is not only essential but

also skills and several competencies are importance for professionals. Employees may or may not hold education degree but be able to develop competence on their work which is from the combination of training, skills from experience and knowledge that an employee is able to apply them effectively. Consequently, every job needs several competencies to perform a task competently (Health and Safety Executive).

In order to develop human resources in the country, Thailand Profession Qualification Frameworks was invented by Thailand Profession Qualification Institute: TPQI (Public Organization) which is aimed to enhance the productivity of human resources by developing profession qualifications as a mechanism. It is called professional standard. In doing so, TPQF has criterion of professional qualification according with the professional standards of performance. Each professional qualification framework's level illustrates the criterion of knowledge and skills responsibilities gained from the performances.

TPQF has established 7 levels of professional qualification framework as the instruments for assessing and certifying the performance of professional standards as seen in Table 2.



**Table 2:** Thailand Professional Qualification Frameworks

Sourced from: Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (2018)

Level			Description
<b>Level 7</b>	National Qualification of Advanced Professional Competence	Top Management, Novel & Original: Career Expert	Possesses excellent skills in sustainably developing: corporate administration, working system and innovation, and human resources: able to analyze and evaluate in order to resolve the company's crisis including determine course and future the company should take whether changing its corporate culture to be widely accepted domestically and internationally
<b>Level 6</b>	National Qualification of Higher Professional Competence	Experienced Specialists and Senior Management: Experienced Specialist	Possesses management skills and capable and analyze and evaluate situation to systematically and effectively resolve complicated and unpredicted issues including able to apply his/her knowledge and various professional skills in assigned tasks
<b>Level 5</b>	National Qualification of Professional Competence	Professionally Qualified, and Mid-Management: Expert	Possesses techniques and practical skills to perform complicated operation; able to cooperate in the process of planning, managing and determine corporate policy using theory and needed technique to freely resolve conflict; able to develop new innovation and technology, also apply foreign language skills and technology in assigned tasks including capable of training and teach others

Table 2: (continuous)

Level			Description
<b>Level 4</b>	National Advanced Diploma Qualification of Vocational Competence	Supervisors, Foremen, Superintendents academically Qualified Workers, Junior Management: Specialist	Technical skills in practice Various conceptual skills and practices Conclude and make the decision to solve the problems associated with using the theories and techniques independently on their own possesses technical skills which are practical in real operation, also possesses various necessary conceptual and practical skills, must be able to perform, conclude and make decision to solve work-related problem by freely utilizing possessed theory and technique
<b>Level 3</b>	National Diploma Qualification of Vocational Competence	Skilled Personnel/ Worker: Subject Expert	Possesses specialized and technical skills, also thinking process and various other skill; must be able to solve technical problem by referring to guideline and related information under advisory of the supervisor
<b>Level 2</b>	National Qualification of Vocational Competence 2	Semi-skilled Personnel/Worker: Skilled Labour	Possesses determined practical skills and able to resolve routinely basic conflicts by applying theory, tools and basic information under supervisor's observation
<b>Level 1</b>	National Qualification of Vocational Competence 1	Basic skilled Personnel/Worker Basic Skilled Personnel	Ability to perform routine tasks Resolve the common basic problem in their work regulated by closely monitoring

Recently, 44 sectors and 481 occupations have completely been navigated to accreditation and certified under TPQI's methods, rules, and conditions to accredit individual's competence by following occupational standard; for instance, logistics, thai chef, tour guide, property management, spa service, tourism, hotel & restaurant (hotel and tourism), insurance business, automobile service or aviation business.

#### **2.4 Competency of aviation personnel**

According to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), aviation personnel licensing on air travel not only include pilot but also flight attendants and ground personnel – aircraft mechanics, aircraft maintenance engineers, aircraft maintenance planning engineer, ground equipment service, cargo service, catering, airline ticket agent or information technology in which their core competencies for instance, customer service oriented, flexible and adaptable, interpersonal skills, communication skills, teamwork, integrity and ethical, professional and pleasant image and safety awareness are essential for service efficiency and safe operations of the flight (International Civil Aviation Organization, 1984).

### **3. Summary and Conclusions**

The literature review in this paper reveals that TPQF established to promote professional qualification system in the nation, and also is a

major key mechanism to enhance the progress, competencies and productivity of worker whose knowledge, skills, and proficiencies are essentially needed for a professional worker in Thailand. However, TPQF did not focus on vocational qualifications like Europe, Australia or New Zealand.

Many countries invented and developed qualifications frameworks for several purposes; for instance, support lifelong learning, enhance the relationship between education, training and labor market, these create a platform of cooperation among stakeholder and provide a reference area for quality assurance. Whereas, the main TPQF mainly purposes are to accredit individual's competency by following occupational standard.

TPQF consists only 7 levels which each level has two components – learning outcomes and level descriptors; whereas ten ASEAN members employ AQRF that consists of 8 levels.

Additionally, TPQF's policies and practices reveal a lot of benefits not only aviation personnel but also 488 occupations that have already established. TPQF will seek better opportunities for Thai employees in labor's domestic market under occupational standard by accrediting, awarding and quality assuring qualifications. Thus, to benefit the international labor's market for Thai employees, TPQF needs to develop their frameworks to meet international occupational standard.

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